

REMARKS

The Specification has been amended to remove the reference signs in the Abstract of Disclosure. The Claims have been amended to remove multiple dependencies. Claims 1-30 are pending in this application.

Conclusion

Entry of the above amendments is earnestly solicited. An early and favorable first action on the merits is earnestly solicited.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact James T. Eller, Jr. (Reg. No. 39,538) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37.C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.14; particularly, extension of time fees.

Dated: February 4, 2005

Respectfully submitted,

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Abstract

A method and machine for packing a group of cartons of cigarettes in a flat tubular package, whereby a first portion and a second portion of a suction gripping head respectively engage a first lateral wall of the flat tubular package, and a second lateral wall of the flat tubular package separated from the first lateral wall by a respective preformed fold line; a rotational movement is then generated between the first and second portion of the suction gripping head to rotate the first and second lateral wall engaged by the suction gripping head with respect to each other, and so convert the flat tubular package from the flat configuration to an open configuration; the group of cartons of cigarettes is then pushed inside the open tubular package, and the suction gripping head is moved to feed the open tubular package to a sealing station where the open tubular package is sealed.

(Figure 2)